

We understand the Economic Affairs Committee is looking at ideas for economic development, and on behalf of the Montana Contractors' Association, I offer the following:

- 1) Pass an "open container" law that meets criteria of the Federal Highway Administration. This simple, and responsible action will assure that roughly \$6 million/year stays in Montana and is spent paying people and purchasing goods and services for construction. Every \$1 million spent on construction translates into about 46 jobs, meaning an open container bill sustains more than 270 jobs—many of them highly paid jobs.
- 2) Appropriate funds to the colleges of technology so they can ramp up training programs for the construction trades. Hundreds of jobs are being created each year in construction—from carpenters to heavy equipment operators—and companies cannot find qualified workers. Money could be transferred from the UM Environmental Studies Program, which teaches students how to systematically dismantle Montana's economy. Using those funds to instead teach employable skills in productive industries is an economic "win-win."
- 3) Tap the coal trust for infrastructure improvements at the state and local levels. Streets, bridges, sewer & water systems, buildings, irrigation projects, are falling apart. Fixing them will create short-term jobs and will enhance Montana's ability to attract and hold industries that depend on quality infrastructure.

We look forward to continued interaction with the committee.

Cary Hegreberg
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